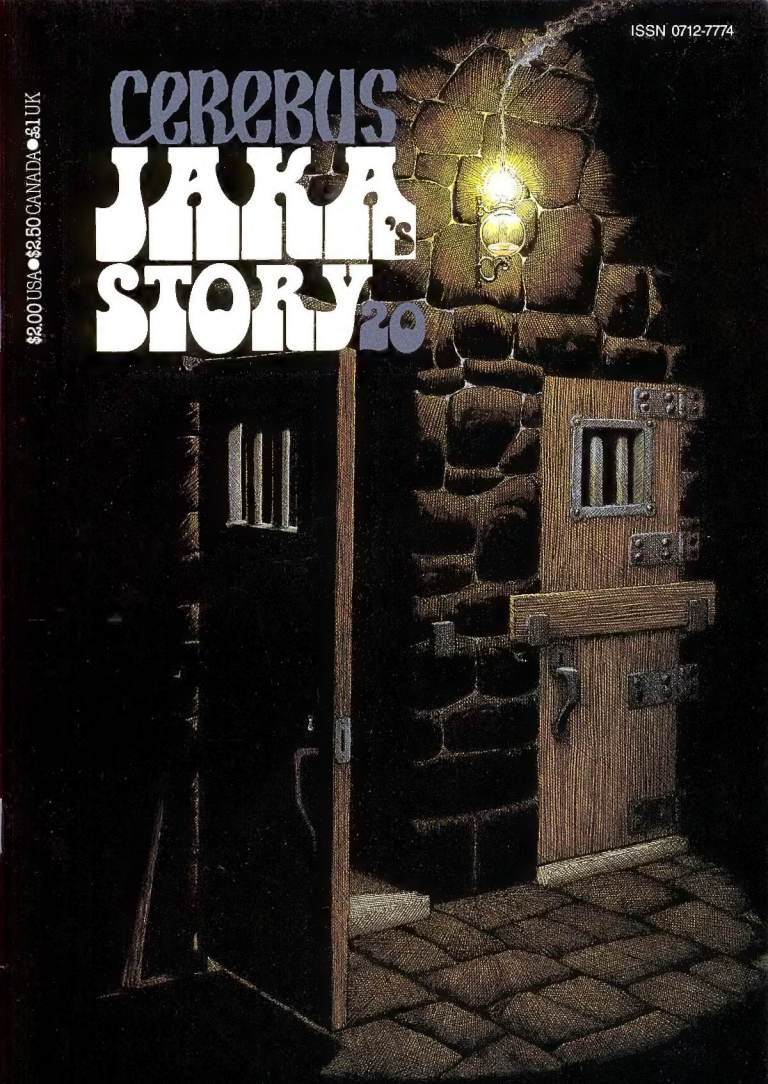
ISSN 0712-7774

Cerebus

JAKA's STORY 20

$2.00 USA • $2.50 CANADA • £1 UK



133
APR

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

I just wrote out the announcement for our price increase.

I remember sitting in Gene Day's kitchen in Gananoque rolling a mound of cigarettes with his cigarette rolling machine in 1976 and saying that if I could *just* make a hundred dollars a week and if I could *just* make it drawing comics and (dream on) if I could just make it doing the comics that I *wanted* to do, I would never ask for anything again for the rest of my life *ever*.

When I moved out of my parents house in December of that year, I was making sixty dollars a month working three days a week at Now & Then Books, I had a bank account of about a thousand dollars I got by selling my comic book collection (to Now & Then Books, of course) and my rent was one hundred and twenty dollars a month.

Ger just talked to one of our accountants (Joy. Hi, Joy) and our Gross Profit Margin is down by about ten percent.

See. I don't think that way.

There's money in the bank — not as much as there has been, but certainly more than enough because a big batch came in on the Cerebus trade paperback 30 days after it shipped and replaced the divot from the down-payment on the Off-White House.

Shit. It took me years to get over the idea of working til there was a pile of money and then living off of it until I needed some more. At the same time I *understand* Gross Profit Margin. The printing bills are slightly higher. So are the professional fees (Hi, Doug, Hi, Wilf). Our mortgage payment is about fifty percent more than our rent was. Circulation went down and then levelled off. Now its going down again. No big crisis. Everyone's circulation is going down. In our case, revenues from the graphic novels hide the vanishing profit margins on *Cerebus* and *Cerebus High Society*. But that can go on, literally, to the point where both comic book titles are operated at a loss and the graphic novels are what pay the bills (or, more accurately, are the primary sources of sand in the top of the hour-glass).

It's been two years since the last price increase. We have to increase the price sometime, right? At the same time there are people who will stop buying the book when the price goes up. Is Ger's and my time *worth* an extra twenty-five cents a month or an extra thirty cents every other week? The Canadian dollar has been holding firm around 84 or 85 cents and most comics still have a Canadian price based on the 75 cent dollar of five years ago. The British pound is nose-diving and I haven't read a word from Mrs. Thatcher that addresses that fact.

What to do? What to do?

Well, we're increasing the prices by an average of 10% so the top of the hour-glass keeps pace with the increased consumption of the bottom of the hour-glass. The Canadian price change (in proportion) is the smallest, the U.K. price change (in proportion) is the largest and the U.S. price change is somewhere in between.

With any luck it will be at least two years before I have to rationalise about money again.

PRICE INCREASES

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Cerebus 137 - $2.25 USA - $2.75 CANADA - £1.25 U.K.

Cerebus High Society 11 - $2.00 USA - $2.25 CANADA - £1.10 U.K.

CEREBUS

NO. 133 APRIL 1990

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

MONIQUE KAPTEIN
Administrative Assistant

JAKA'S STORY
a novel

•

PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 114)

•

POGROM'S PROGRESS
(Cerebus 115 to Cerebus 119)

•

THE POET
(Cerebus 120 to Cerebus 130)

•

MYSTERY ACHIEVEMENT
(Cerebus 131 to Cerebus 136)

•

CEREBUS IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC. P.O. BOX 1674 STN. C KITCHENER ONTARIO CANADA N2G 4R2

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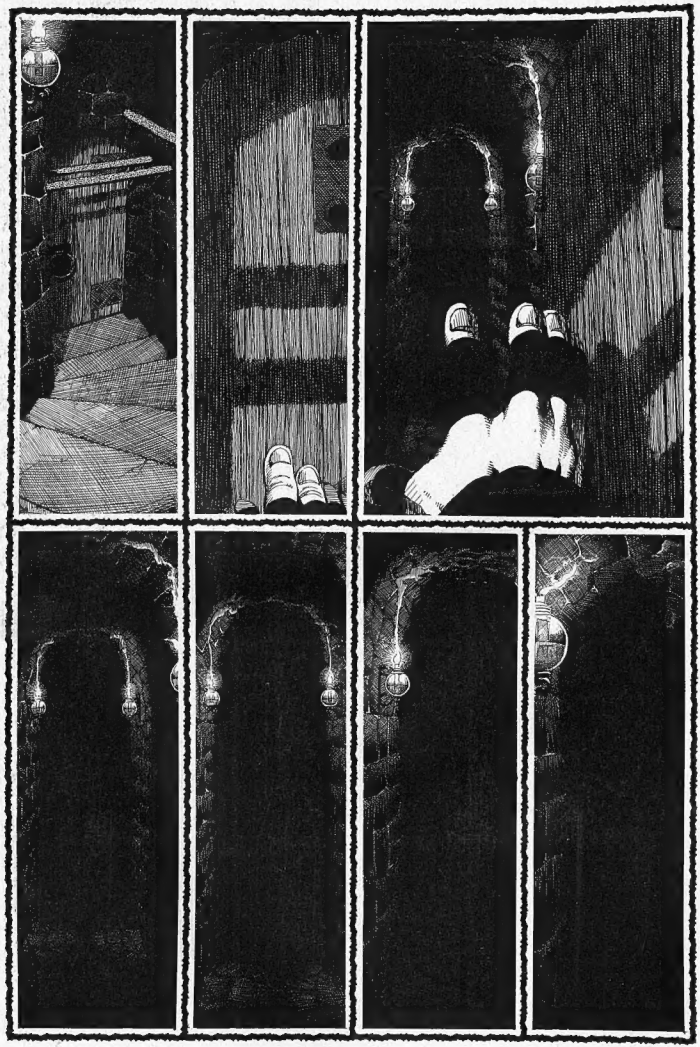
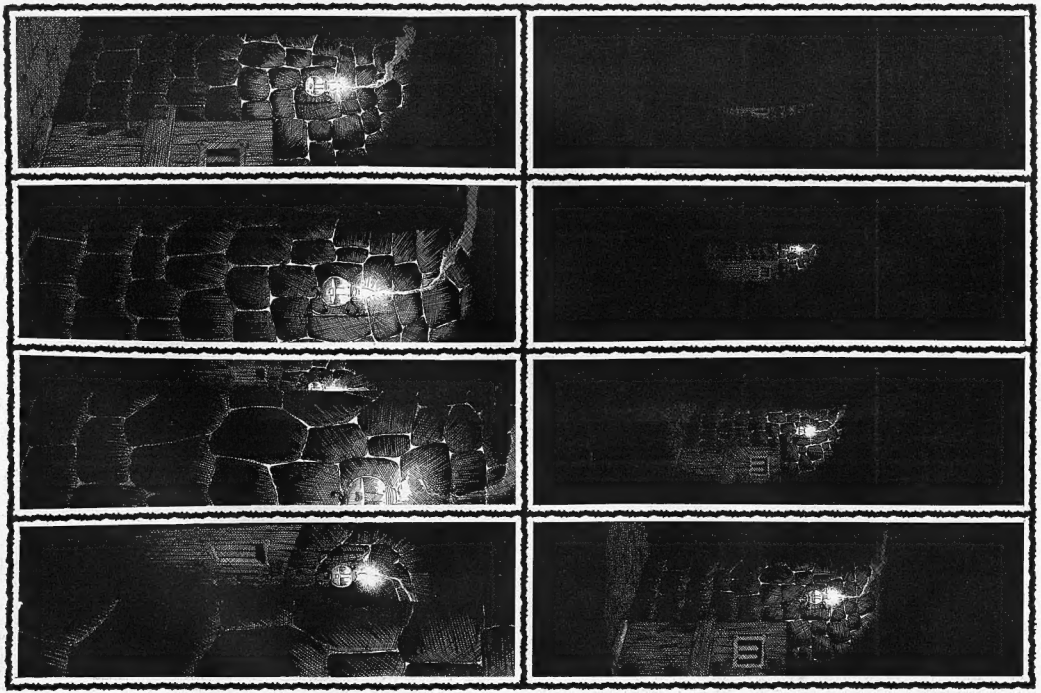
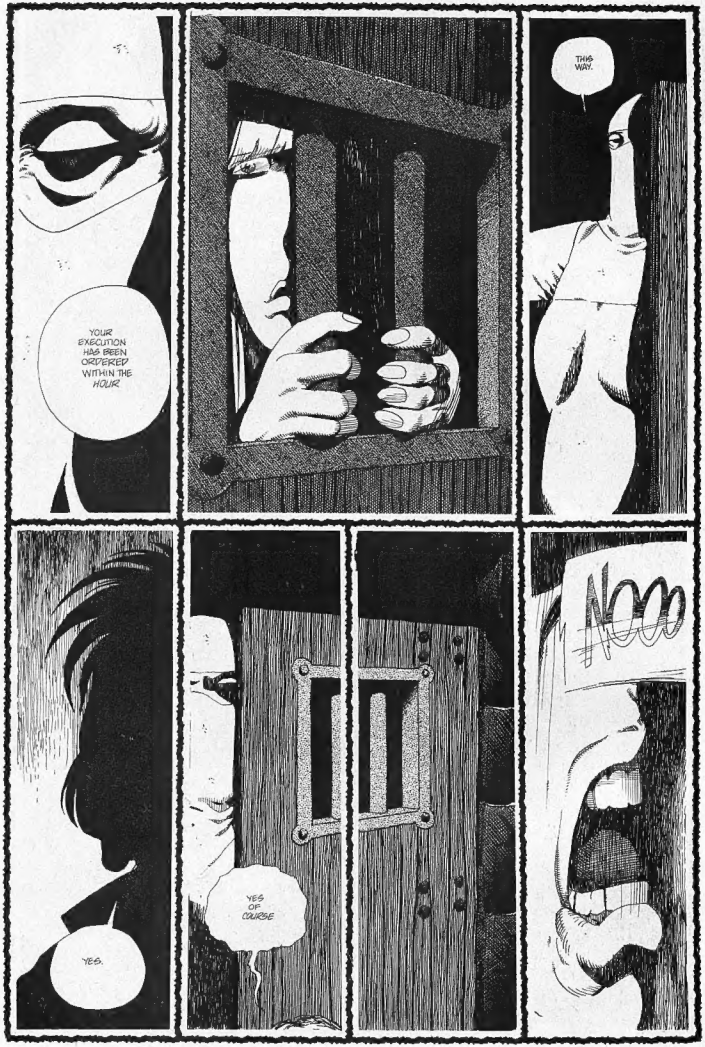




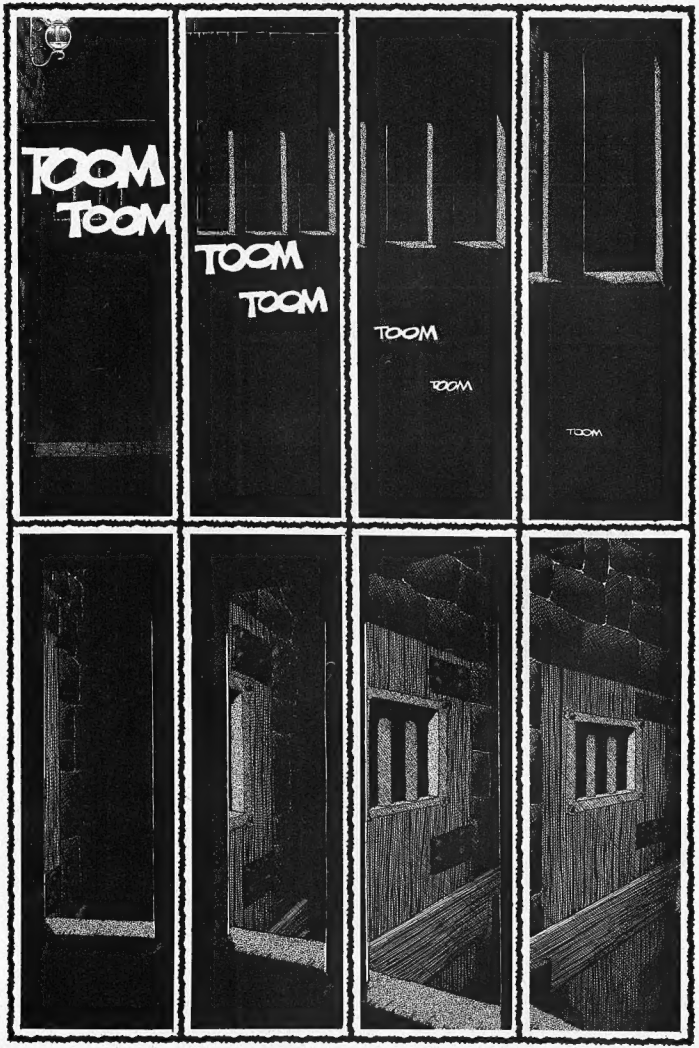
BUT IT WAS HUGE!
SHSH

QUIET
IN THE CELLS!!

CHING
JINGLE
TING
ching
ADA TALBOT
YES?
YOU HAVE BEEN FOUND TO BE IN POSSESSION OF FORGED? IDENTIFICATION


YOUR EXECUTION HAS BEEN ORDERED WITHIN THE HOUR
THIS WAY.
NOOO
YES OF COURSE
YES.

CANH!!
UH
QUIET...
IN THE CELLS
TOOM


TOOM
TOOM
TOOM
TOOM
TOOM
TOOM
TOOM

SHE (QUITE SIMPLY) adored the new residence. Though she regretted leaving the Hidden Room behind (with a regret that she felt quite deeply, indeed), the increased stature implied by her new surroundings more than compensated her (she felt) for her loss. Moreover, she was certain that this was a sign, at last, from her Uncle Julius; an acknowledgement of her importance in his life and a tangible gesture of affection for her.

Impetuously, she decided, then and there, to write him a letter and, in a furious rush of emotion-laden eloquence, filled many sheets in a very short time with her recollections, hopes, fantasies and dreams. As is the case with most introspective individuals, free expression was as fine wine to her and she drank deeply of it in the pouring forth of heart and soul.

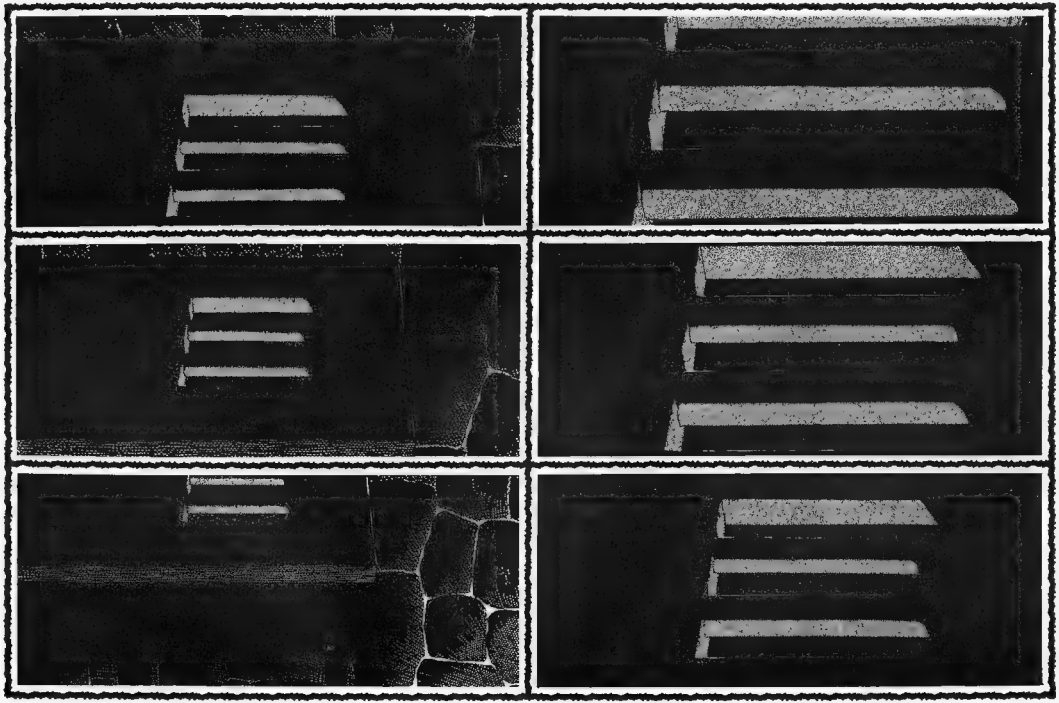
Concluding her lengthy missive, she announced, forth-rightly, that she had always felt Astoria to be an inappropriate and inadequate match for Lord Julius. She added her approval that a department had, at last, been formed to redress the injustices which many loyal Palnan citizens (among whose number she counted herself) had suffered at the hands of *la femme terrible*. Rereading this last part, she felt a twinge of apprehension that, perhaps, an ungraceful note had been struck. On reflection, she attributed this anxiety to a natural reluctance to be the bearer of bad tidings. Besides, she was *really* just commending Lord Julius' good judgement in instituting a 'Department of Don't-Tell-Astoria'. Why form just such a department if he didn't already share her opinion of the woman? Just to be certain she hastened to address and seal the envelope before she could change her mind.

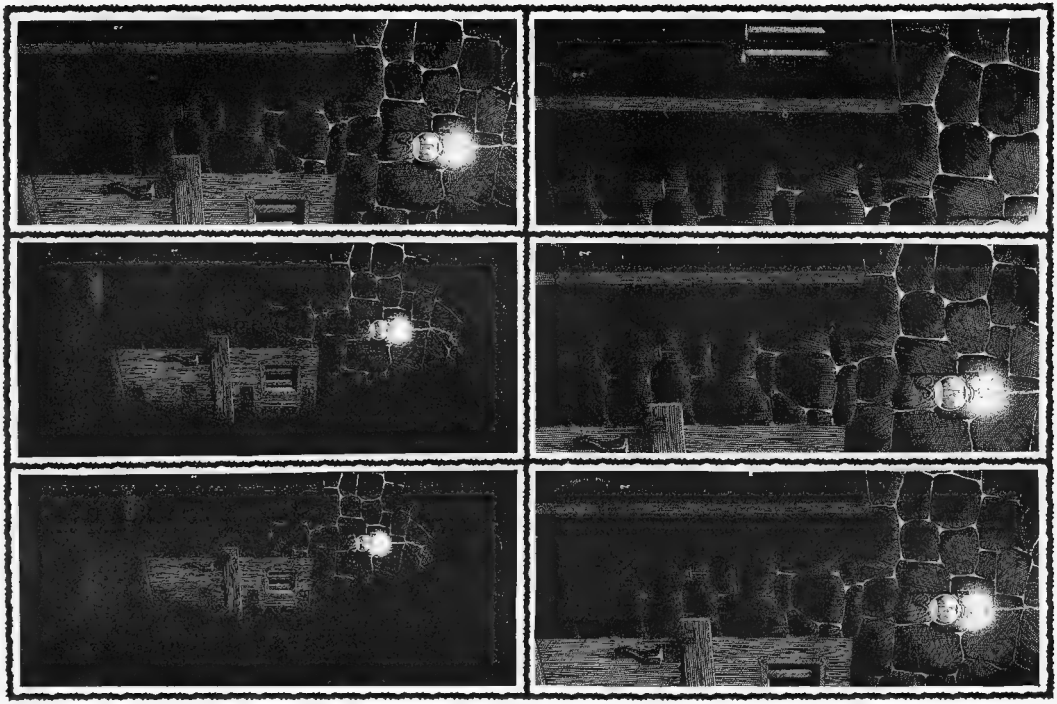
The letter was returned to her several days later, quite obscured by official transit stamps charting its (almost hourly) progress through the intricate and circuitous maze which was and is the legendary Palnan bureaucracy. A small piece of blue onion skin paper was attached, upon which was written

> No department by that name.
> Please consult your directory.

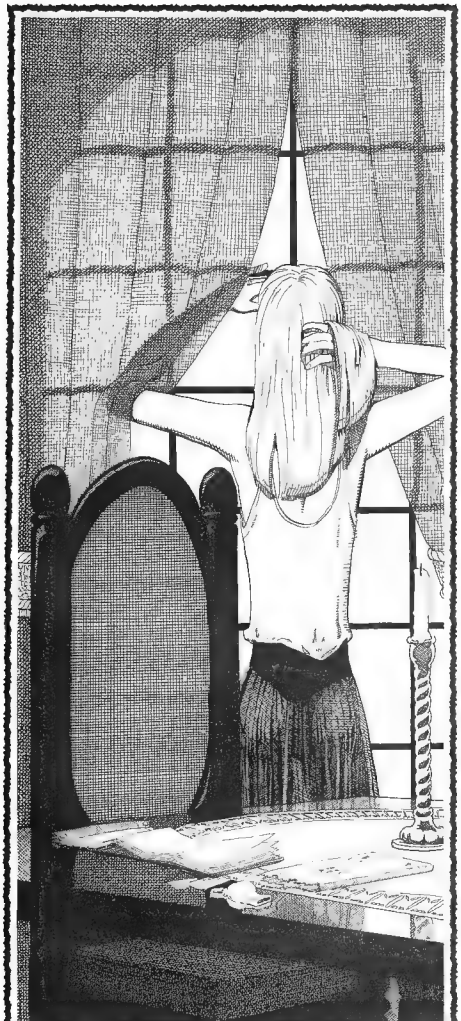
Though young, Jaka was sufficiently schooled in Palnan affairs to sense the trap. 'The Directory', a wholly theoretical catalogue of the names and addresses of all government departments and their chief executives, was reputed to be the single largest Palnan export. It is no exaggeration to state that virtually everyone in Estarcion engaged in some form of large commercial enterprise had, at one time or another, expended a substantial measure of their time and domestic currency in the futile pursuit of this mythical publication.

Switching tactics, she addressed a second envelope, this time to Lord Julius in care of the Office of the Grandlord, adding the word 'personal' in bold capital letters, which she underscored emphatically.





I BE LONG TO
PAL-NU DEAR, LIV

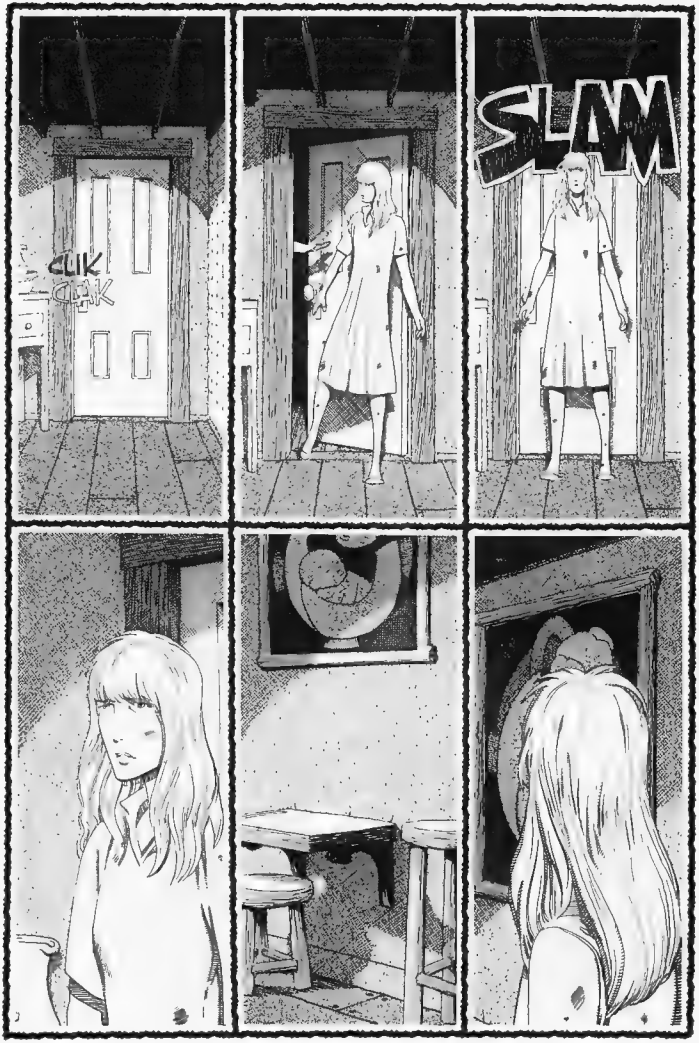


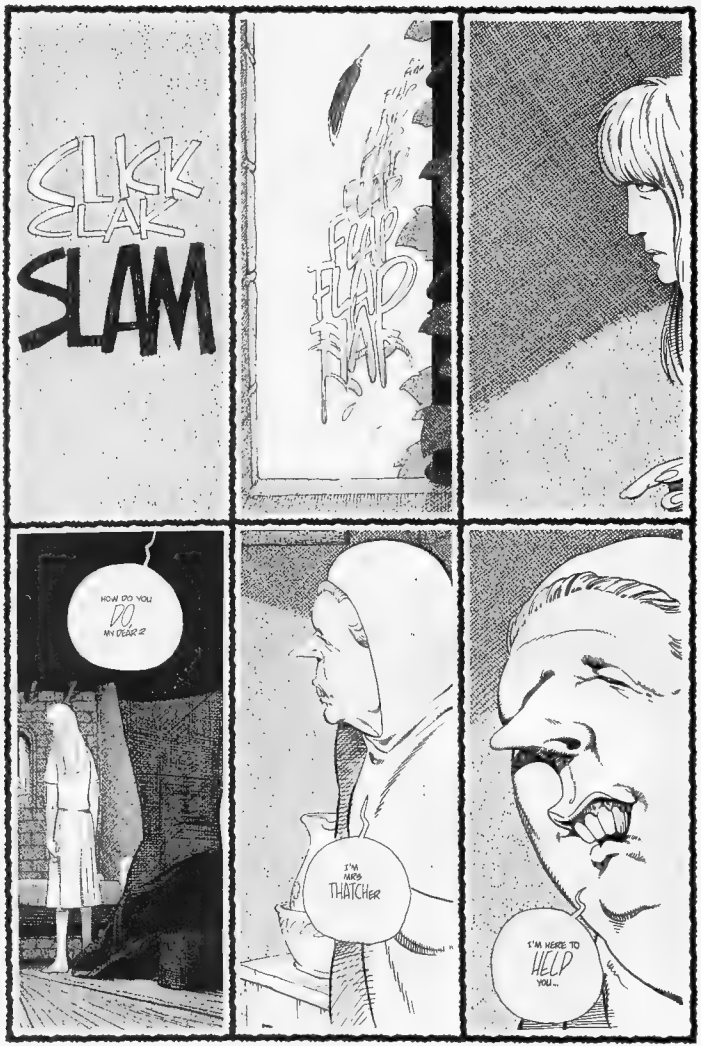
THE NEXT DAY, A BULKY envelope bearing the official stamp of the Office of the Grandlord arrived. It contained thirty sheets of blue, onion-skin paper, bound at the top: the first fifteen pages upon which was written several hundred times (front and back) "I will not open letters addressed to Lord Julius personally;" the *last* fifteen of which amplified this sentiment with "I am a naughty bureaucrat" repeated at, likewise, excruciating length.

On closer examination the envelope proved to contain, in addition to the wad of papers, a small tin whistle and two beer coupons from the Parmoc pavilion valid for all three days of the previous year's Festival of Petunias.

The envelope had arrived just as she had begun her dance practice for the day. Try as she might to refocus her attention on the co-ordinated pin-wheeling of her extremities, she could think of little else but the envelope's queer contents. What *did* they signify? She could understand her uncle being cross with whomever had opened her letter. She could even (at least to a degree) understand his compelling the fellow to fill thirty sheets with closely-spaced admissions of guilt. But why send *her* the results of the punishment? And what did the whistle and the beer coupons portend? She had *told* him in the letter that she was very, very nearly twelve years old. Why would someone send a very, very nearly twelve year old girl invalid beer coupons?

She pondered and she puzzled and when next she grew aware of herself and her surroundings the shadows on the sculpted hedges and trees in the garden below had stretched nearly to their optimum and a grey dusk had settled, as distant birdsongs grew intermittent and, at last, were still.


CLIK
CLAK
SLAM


CLKK
CLAK
SLAM
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
HOW DO YOU DO MY DEAR ?
I'M MRS THATCHER
I'M HERE TO HELP YOU..

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Dave,

Up to now, I've been mainly interested in the building of tensions in the larger story of Cerebus' travels. Here's Cerebus, holed up in an apartment, shared by a dancer in a pub living right next to a nosy, eloquent-mouthed, ass-kissing, fat-ass who probably wouldn't hesitate to let word of her slither into a sympathetic ear once the amusement factor goes low enough. (Like after Jaka's Story is written). Then he goes and paints a guffin right on the mountain roadway. I don't know what a guffin is, but it sure smells like trouble for Cerebus. (Hold on, I have to put the laundry in so I'm not LATE). Ok let's see - right - the little old man comes in and it's only a matter of time before the pub is jam-packed with Cirinists.

Then this issue, Jaka's Story #15, comes along and I felt it. I really did. I felt a twinge when Rick told Jaka Cerebus would be alright because he had his sword, and Jaka says, "Do you really think so. Gee my snuggle bunny's falling asleep. Go back to bed. Everything'll be alright - besides what are the chances he'll be recognized. I mean he was only the LAST FUCKING POPE AND THE PLACE IS CRAWLING WITH CIRINISTS!" Are these people nuts?

Then, the bed. I saw the ghosts of broken bodies laying forgotten where they fell. One pillow missing. PUT THE PILLOW BACK! PUT THE PILLOW BACK! No. No. Not the floor. Please not the floor. — AAAAAAGGGGGGHHH!

And there it was, jealousy. (I wish I knew if I spelt that write).

That's really incredible, Dave. I felt the same feelings (including a slight gut wrench) that I felt for a particular ex-girlfriend. (whom I still love bless her twisted heart). These people are real. You've created actual people - with all the complexities of real people - and even subconsciousnesses. This blows away the "power" complexities of High Society and Church & State.

I've often thought (especially during non-stop Cerebus weekends). That Cerebus is the only thing "real". (the only non-reality being eating, defecating, and putting the comics back in the bags). Then along comes this issue which, in Oscar's words, lifts a sincere and deep emotion. You're toying with the subconscious, Dave. You have an incredible accomplishment on your hands, and in the hands of about 25,000 people.

Well, my mind's wandering to school and I should probably follow. Hey could Rick avoid wearing a black shirt at Oscar's. I don't remember his place being so dark. And (Hi, Cassandra) watching that cigarette bouncing off the cliff gave me vertigo. I swear it did. Would that be intense - CONSTANT Intensity living on the edge of a cliff or what? And hey, was it my imagination or was that cigarette sprouting ears and a nose?

Onward,

Beaner Johnston

(name changed due to poor syntax and incomplete thought processes)

Living on Tempe Time

P.S. If you've ever written to Aardvark Comment you know the thought of the possibility of being printed gnaws at the back of your head.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

I have to congratulate Bernie Mojzes on his brilliant theory of what sex is. This is the first in-depth letter I have ever read in Cerebus.

Bernie, your theory is wonderful, not to mention that you're right about reality simulating fantasy. Entertainers don't get the millions they do for nothing.

I've been following the Wanker story since it started, and each letter gets a little more into it.

Keep publishing!

Yves Grant
26 Aberdeen St.
Newton, MA
USA 02161

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Could it be that Rick is a shadow of your former (present) self? I didn't think so but the idea keeps nagging me, "... don't you know who that Fat Lady really is? . . . It's Christ himself . . ."

-J.D. Salinger, *Franny and Zooey*

(Just something I read and liked).

Keep it going,

Matt Smith
1055 Robert Dr. Apt. 3B
Colombus, IN
USA 47201

P.S. Jaka's #15 - GREAT cover!

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

I just got the joke today.

Pud Withers.

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!!!!

I may be slow, but I am appreciative.

Sincerely,

Philip J. Flores
9521 SE Eola Hills Rd.
Amity, OR
USA 97101

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

Regarding the cover for CEREBUS #129: what happened, exactly, to Rick's feet? But seriously, folks, this brings me to my *real* question (as opposed to my artificial question). Dave, you must be one anal-compulsive kinda guy (and frankly, that endears you to me) (no, not *that* way!). It seems to me that you couldn't allow yourself to release an issue of CEREBUS without at least *one* panel featuring the title character, and so for two issues in a row now you've stuck that poor little aardvark in a thought balloon (and wearing a dress, no less) (uh, that is to say, the one wearing a dress was Cerebus, and not the thought balloon). It's not like there haven't been previous issues of CEREBUS without Cerebus in 'em (#62 comes to mind) so this must be a relatively new psychosis which you have developed. Congratulations! What's life without one or two annoying mental disorders, right?

But seriously (no, I'm *serious* this time), the absence of the Gray-Furred One has not reduced my enjoyment of these past few issues in the slightest. Hey, don't get me wrong; I am looking forward to his imminent return, but in the meantime these non-Cerebus CEREBUS issues have been a lot of fun indeed. Besides, I assume he'll be back for "Mystery Achievement," which starts in just two issues from now.

Finally, howcum and why is it that you no longer answer, in print anyway, the

letters published in "Aardvark Comment"? Is it just a matter of being too busy, too stoned, or is it a new editorial policy? To be honest, I *miss* your little "bon mots, edicts or plain old insults" (to quote from Matthew Bates' letter, which was published in CEREBUS #129), even when they are, on occasion, directed at yours truly. C'mon, Dave, this isn't the Globe & Mail here! Get with it! (And if that doesn't get a bon mot, edict, or plain old insult out of you, *nothing* will!)

Yours most sincerely,

Conrad Felber
1319 Rose Marie Avenue
Sudbury, Ontario
P3A4E4

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

POINT ONE: I'm just Wilde about . . .

I am interested in your characterization of Oscar. He is, it appears, half genius, half buffoon (witness 'Whet Whilly'), *et alia*). I have always taken Wilde, both from his own writing and from others' to be a perceptive, witty and downright *beautiful* human being, whose crime was romantic guilelessness. You seem to be portraying him as an affected, misogynist dullard with a great talent for writing. I certainly don't want to appear to be criticising this; a) Oscar is not Wilde, rather a character inspired by him; b) you may well know something about him that I don't; and c) he's your character to do with what you will. I would, however, be interested in reading your thoughts on the character and your creation of him. (And, of course, your thoughts on Wilde.)

POINT TWO: Pedantic Semantic

#128; Oscar's description of Jaka dancing. Sorry, Dave, but - "irregardless"?

POINT THREE: Hallelujah Ballyhooya Sock-it-to-ya

Power Atheist Dave Katzman (Aardvark Comment, #128) seems to be missing the point about organized religion. Any intelligent critique of religious orthodoxy in any form must surely, to begin, make a clear distinction between *faith* in a supreme being and religion. One might believe in any god, God or gods with a great fervour; one might even believe in the Bible, Koran or whatever - every word - without necessarily ascribing to any religion *per se*. Religion, however, almost always requires some form of ritualistic (physical or psychological) admission to a *collective* group under a pious hierarchy.

As such, organized religion is, potentially, amongst the most insidious of hindrances to communion with the Almighty, for it reduces the nobility of belief into the impersonal, materialistic and transient machinations of ritual, and subordinates the individual's thought to conformity - thus potentially standing smack bang in the way of true faith. After all, isn't faith an *individual's* conscious belief, heart, mind and soul, in something?

POINT FOUR: Crosshatchers of the world, unite!

Dave - how about a regular Note from the Vice-President? Ger - how about it?

Yours sincerely,

Mathew Bates
33 Park Street
Hawthorn Victoria
3122
Australia

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

Midterm I ought to be studying for right now, but the mere compulsive feeling that makes me feel like I ought to be studying makes me feel repressed by society's desire for everyone to simultaneously succeed and fail. So the only thing to do is read the letters column from the latest Cerebus and slap a couple of stamps on a letter of my own.

You see, it's this girl. Before saying this I actually wondered if she might ever see it, if you ever fucking printed it, but hey, who am I kidding? If Cerebus was simply so huge that you could find more than two people who you didn't expressly tell about it who are reading it, then it just wouldn't be Cerebus anymore, would it? I mean, I fucking hate it when you used to be able to take pride in liking something rare and unheard of and then the next time you go to see the goddamned band it's in an arena or a stadium that seats some fifty-thousand-teeny-bopper-fans who only know the lyrics to the stupid-ass sellout song they've been playing on the goddamn radio and all over fucking MTV. (God, what a horrific vision: Cerebus on MTV. Wouldn't that just suck? Oh, you'd be raking in the dough, sure, but from my perspective, wouldn't it just suck?)

Anyway. The girl. Short of it is, I want her, but she's across the Atlantic Ocean, and she theoretically doesn't know (know that I want her, not that she's across the Atlantic Ocean, of course). I can't see her or tell her until, say, June, if I'm lucky, and it's been, like, a year that I haven't told her how I feel, and seven months since I last saw her. Various reasons, like her having a boyfriend (and me being significantly out of my head), pushed it this far.

But hey. She last wrote me that she had broken up with the guy, so now I can't get my mind off of her. I am vaguely reminded of issue . . . oh, I don't fucking remember which issue it was. I don't even remember exactly what I'm remembering. Just some time Cerebus is thinking about Jaka when he hasn't seen her in eons. (You know how hard it is to find some passing moment on some page buried somewhere in some indeterminate region of some hundred or so fucking issues?)

So what do I do? Waste my fucking life thinking about this next to impossible dream of a life with the girl I haven't seen since August?

Salvation is a mere Jaka away.

B. Daniel
Columbia University
New York, New York

P.S. I don't mean to drool, but that was an excellent sequence of pages where you've got Jaka dancing in issue 129. Especially the last page of the three. Something about the way she's looking out at the reader (me).

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

One of the question pondered on by loyal fans of Cerebus is the "three aardvarks" question. One is obviously Cerebus himself. Although someone referred to her as an elephant in a previous Aardvark Comment, I'm pretty sure Cirin is the second aardvark. We know that whoever the third aardvark is, he/she will be *very* important to the political and religious issues in Estarcion. We know, from dreams, that Cerebus was raised by humans. It has been assumed that those humans were babysitters (aardvark sitters) or "nannys". I feel if Cerebus did have aardvark parents then wouldn't it be safe to assume that there would be a chance that he or the two other aardvarks would have relatives of some sort thereby raising the total number of aardvarks by a couple cousins or aunts? That's why I believe that Cerebus, or any other aardvark is born to humans making these zoomorphic creatures more of a freak of nature than a separate race. This would explain why Cirin, the person (aardvark) with the strongest matriarchial views would have to resort to adopting someone. (In this case, Sir Gerrick).

This introduces my two beliefs of the third aardvark. My first guess is that it's Astoria and Sir Gerrick's baby. The factor of aardvarks holding importance is if the baby was found alive then Cirin will never be able to kill Astoria. If the baby was found dead Cirin would kill Astoria. In issue 97 its apparent Cirin has found out the "what's the physical state of the baby?" question when Astoria says that if Cerebus executes Astoria Cirin would attack. This is true if the baby was born, but if it wasn't born Cirin wouldn't "want the pleasure of her demise" as Astoria states two panels

later. That part was an excuse to avoid having to tell Cerebus about the aardvark child. Of course if the baby *was* born and Astoria killed it then Cirin would want the pleasure of Astoria's demise because of infanticide. And if Astoria, instead of waiting for birth used a pharmaceutically induced miscarriage (abortion), well, I don't know where Astoria stands on that. Then there's also the chance that Sir Gerrick is the other Aardvark but I don't feel like getting into that.

Cerebus, the best comic of all time, like The Prisoner, the greatest television show of all time, leaves a lot of questions unanswered and not only sparks debate about what is the truth of the situation, but also has us rethink our beliefs whether it be rape, rebellion, religion, politics, abortion, or Creation. What I *really* want to know is who would impersonate the Regency ELF?

Thanx!

Danny Selzer
6 Connel Drive
W. Orange, NJ
USA 07052

P.S. I think one factor of the "D.C. pulls Swamp Thing" controversy that's often overlooked by such responsible people as the The Comics Journal is that Swamp Thing 89 was illustrated by Michael Zulli.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I just wanted to let you know that McDonald's and Burger King are tearing down the earth's rain forests so that they can raise cheap cattle. So I (and I hope anyone who reads this) am boycotting those two companies.

Now that that is off of my chest I just wanted to ask you if you could mail me your white loafers. I met you at the Mid-Ohio-Con in '87 and you were wearing them then and I was hoping you wouldn't need them anymore.

Thank you for giving us Cerebus,

Rob Reynolds
Indiana University
Foster-Martin 324
Bloomington, IN
USA 47406

P.S. I printed this up on my new printer that my parents shelled bucks out for and it wasn't even my birthday!

P.P.S. I sure do love my parents and everything they do for me!

P.P.P.S. I was wondering . . . Is Gerhard pronounced Jer-HARD, JER-hard, *GARE-hard* **(rhymes with AIR-hard)**, or gare-HARD?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave;

Well, now *that's* neat. Lower Feldan being French I mean. Another language that is an honest-to-God, no-foolin, really-for-real other language. Plus it just happens to be French, which is increasingly getting chaff around your part of Canada. But you know this (Just in case you print this, non-Canadian readers might not know what that's about. In Canada we have two official languages, English and French - so we have English and French on all the things we buy, for example. Now some parts of Ontario are complaining about French and are legislating against it. Pussies.) Not that I'm a francophone or anything; far from it. I just don't think any of these people in Ontario deserve to hate French until they've had to take it in University and had to watch "He Shoots, He Scores" for four hours every week (By the way Dave, I don't suppose you know how it all works out, do you? After the coup de monde? No? Well then . . . (drumroll) fuck you . . . just had to get that out of my system). I don't know what's wrong with these people - one of the things that *really* makes us Canadian is the way we get kindergarten level french lessons on our cereal boxes and know that Rice Krispies is "la céréale qui parle". It's scary. A couple of small twists of fate and Cerebus could have been all in French and hardly any of us would be reading it or have ever heard of it. I'm not really making a point here, but that's not a first for letters of this kind, ie. to you.

So I don't know. I've just been mulling over this bullshit and realizing that we Canadians are just as capable in our own small way of being as stupid as everybody else, and this issue (of Cerebus) just sort of crystallized that. So I don't know. The last few Cerebi have been really good, we like it, even if the aardvark hasn't said a word in some six or seven issues or whatever and hasn't even appeared in the last two. I guess Dave moves in mysterious ways. Just thought I'd get that off my chest.

Stephen Notley
#601-11027 87th Ave.
Edmonton, AB
T6G 2P9

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

A few nights ago, I was talking to this girl and we got into a huge argument about creationism and evolution. (Since I'm writing to you, I guess you know what side I'm on.) This girl is truly scary. She's a born-again Christian, she believes everything in the Bible is a literal truth, she is an avowed prolifer, and, in short, she stands against anything I stand for.

I've also been romantically involved with her three times.

What the hell kind of possible rationalization could I have had for that?! One of the great mysteries of the universe, I suppose.

Yours,

Jeremy "God? God who?" Bushnell
1120 Bristol Rd.
Warminster, PA
USA 18974

P.S. Why are almost all high school students anal-relative sexist idiots concerned only with AIDS jokes and being more cool than Tom, Dick and Harry down in Room 208? Get me out of here, Dave. Get me into college.

P.P.S. But will it be any different?

P.P.P.S. Sorry about this. I've just been very tense lately.

★★★★★★★★★★

Hiya Dave!

Since you no longer seem to be answering the letters printed on the letters page and no doubt considered Ralph T. Kirkum's query:

". . . why would a guy wanna fuck another guy in the ass . . ." as rhetorical, perhaps I can answer him.

Anal sex is incredibly arousing if done with the correct partner. Ever since this AIDS crisis began though I no longer partake of this sensual enjoyment and I miss it. (Although if I met Mel Gibson in the right place I may consider doing it again.)

WIth a name like "Kirkum" and a letter closing like "Latatore" I'd think Ralph needn't have asked the question. And what makes him think Oscar would really want to do that anyhow? SHEESH!

Masculinely,

"Mad Max"
P.O. Box 1033
Milwaukee, WI
USA 53201

P.S. I've seen photos of you and Gerhard, Dave, and I wouldn't want to screw either of you guys.

P.P.S. Are there secret sexual meanings in the names "Kir*kum*" or "Ger*hard*"?

P.P.P.S. Even though I'm gay is it ok if I like reading *CEREBUS*?

P.P.P.P.S. I ALWAYS vote for Gerhard as best artist in the Comic Buyer's Guide Fan Awards. EVERY year. Really.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

In response to your Notes in No. 128: I recommend to your attention The Home Planet, a breathtaking, magnificent, thought-provoking book of photos of the Earth taken from space and comments by the world's astronauts. It's published by Addison-Wesley Publish-

ing Company and Mir Publishers, Moscow. I can't find an address but Crown books has it cheap — if you can't find a copy I would be happy to send you one. Space exploration is not science fiction. Space exploration, like Earth exploration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, is about the expansion of horizons, the gaining of a larger perspective. The great challenge of our time is for us to realize the interconnectedness of things, that nothing and nobody exists in isolation, that decisions made by individuals and by nations affect not only themselves but everybody else. We can see this so clearly when we step outside our small domains and look at the larger universe. To see the Earth from space, that unbearably beautiful blue ball of life that holds everything we know, everything we touch, everything that lives as far as we can see, brings home with immediate impact and undeniable vividness the fact that all life depends on the health of the air, land, and sea, that these seemingly vast elements are in fact limited and interconnected and link not only humanity but all life on this planet together in a fragile and precious web. The atmosphere and the oceans are visibly dirtier now than they were twenty years ago. It takes space exploration, which does not necessarily mean flights to distant stars, but simple orbits of our own planet, to show us this fact this clearly. Space exploration is not Star Trek fantasy. (Nothing against Star Trek.) Space exploration is space stations, space telescopes, space energy, industry, asteroid mining, all in Earth or near-Earth orbit. Of course it requires vision and will for the initial investment. But we are using this planet up. I don't believe humanity will voluntarily scale down its standard of living: do you? Have you ever read The Mote in God's Eye, by Niven and Pournelle? The fate of the Moties, on their exhausted, mined-out, hopelessly polluted planet will be our fate unless we escape the womb of Earth, get out into space in a major way, and find some room for growth and expansion. We're running out of space down here. All the Space in the Universe lies just a few miles over our heads.

Very sincerely yours, in friendship and appreciation.

Lori Kaplan
1405 W. Jarvis Apt. #2RE
Chicago, ILL
USA 60626

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

Strange day. Someone handing out Smartfood popcorn at the Beguiling same day I bought 128 and 129. Sometimes the profundity of synchronicity scares me.

Do you feel the swords descending? Maybe it's just that I've been hiding in my affairs for a while and my first good look out the door in a couple of months is scary.

The "liberation" of the Eastern bloc is an excuse for more stupid nationalism and racism which in turn is an excuse for continued arms buildup. I just learned that Jesse Helms is closing down all phone sex in the Altered States of America. This is certainly a brilliant idea, Jess. In a time of AIDS why *not* crack down on a perfectly safe sexual outlet? Besides, aren't we falling a bit behind in our goal of erasing all personal rights and freedoms by the year 1995?

The environmental backlash is approaching like the closing walls in a Batman trap but Toronto plunges forward in "world-class city" mania. As the recession approaches, we watch the Tories dismantle socialism and sell our souls to the Americans. But don't worry, they're going to crack down on us faggots and the non-whites before you caucasian heteros have to worry. Of course, artists will be next. Have you read *The Handmaid's Tale* yet? The scariest part is where, with the push of a button, they cancel all women's bank accounts. Daily, daily, we make ourselves more vulnerable.

Just bought Howie Cruse's new *Wendel* book. Along with you, he is my hero (not to mention one of the finest cartoonists on the scene). May I, if I find a larger audience for my work, have the bravery to damn the torpedoes (ah, a military metaphor, how ironic) and stick to my guns (Lieutenant, help! Get me out here!) like you guys do.

Please keep suprising me. Cerebus is a wonder. The tesselations of *Jaka's* Story are so microscopically fascinating. If you ever go macro again, I'd love to see more Cirinists and Kevillists having at it. (I seem to recall that this present novel was going to be a "Cirinist/Kevellist love story" according to an old Pres's note).

I need a hug just about now. My boyfriend should soon return from work. I await. Right now (8:45 p.m., March 3, 1990), I'm a little ambivalent about the relationship but I tend to forget these doubts mid-hug.

Anyhoo, I've stared at this blasted screen all weekend and OD'd on Prince, Melissa Etheridge, Elvis Costello and vintage David Bowie. I need sleep. A hug and sleep.

G'night.

Jonathan Freeman
Toronto, ON

P.S. As soon as it's done (6 weeks?) I'll send you a copy of my mini-comic which reprints the first six months of my gay comic strip *Homo Erectus* now appearing in Toronto's XTRA! magazine and Miami's The Weekly News. Just want to give you back a little of mine since I've been enjoying yours so much since 1982 or so.

P.P.S. I don't give a flying fuck if you publish this or not. I'm moved by the desire to communicate with you, not by fannish exhibitionism. (Shit, what a snob!)

★★★★★★★★★★

Dearest Dave,

Okay, I'll dispense with the typical bullshit - yes, it's my first letter to a comic/Aardvark Comment/whatever. No, I'm not listening to the goddamn Stones. (Actually, N.W.A. but don't tell the FBI). Yes, it's late at night. No, I'm not a sexually frustrated teenage white boy or a psycho female who reads too much scifi/fantasy and has been haunting cons since age 15. Yes, I've been reading Cerebus for a few years now and I think *Jaka's Story* should replace *Moby Dick* on required reading lists for high school english classes. (or Bill Budd. I'm not picky). And yes, it's a pain to be the only person in a five-mile radius who's heard of Cerebus.

So why should I waste paper on you? Well, it was the remarks on Cokie Roberts in Note from the President (no. 127) and how brilliant she is. I couldn't agree more. But really, has there ever been a point in recorded human history where men have been able to recognize a women's intellect and rational capability without speculating about her sexually?

C'mon, Dave. How would you like it if I said, "Dave Sim is amazing. I mean, he has innovative stories, a great sense of plot structure and timing, he uses black and white beautifully and is basically the most incredibly hip guy in the medium, and boy would I love to strap him down with silk ties and fuck him till he bleeds out the ears?"

Oh, who am I kidding, you'd probably love it.

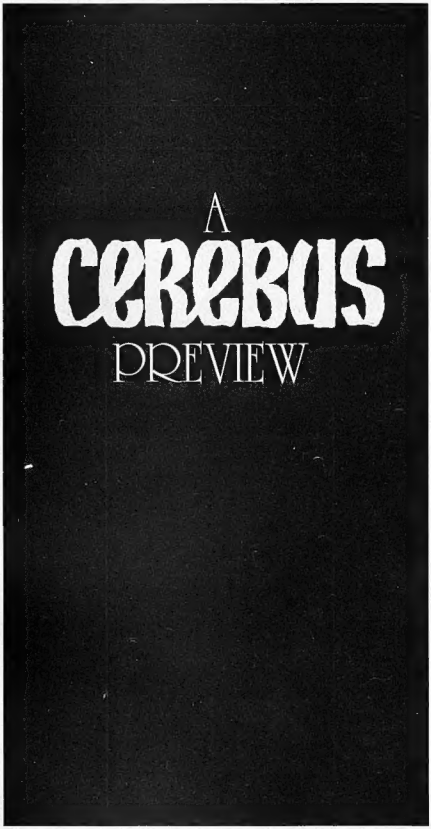
Yours till they find Reagan's brain,

Margaret F. Judy
Box 2864 Mount Holyoke College
South Hadley, MA
01075

"Yes, it's my last name, dammit"

P.S. To the gentleman who referred to female masturbation as "clit-whacking" if you honestly believe that "whacking" is what you're supposed to do with it, I'm not in the least bit surprised that *none* of you assholes can get, much less keep, a girlfriend. Just a friendly hint.

P.S. jr. You folks have the funkiest zip codes. N2G 4R2? Sounds more like a license plate.



Good news for self-publishers! Jeff Nicholson has revived his series Ultra Klutz with issue 28. Yes! Onward Comics is back! 2nd most number of self-published black & white direct sales . . . comic only . . . sold in comic stores . . . issues! Hard to believe! Even harder to say! He also sent this sampling along. I sent a copy to Steve Bissette so there's sure to be a 'Through the Habitrails' story in TABOO (probably 'the Gerbil King'). So excited, I had to send Alan Moore a copy. It's-just-that-good. Don't take my word for it folks, read it yourself. Onward Comics' address appears at the bottom of 'It's Not Your Juice' Write to Jeff and tell him how much you love him.

IT'S NOT YOUR JUICE

THE SINGLE PAGE - ©1990 Jeff Nicholson *Story and Illustration: Jeff Nicholson ~ Lettering: Chad Woody*

"IT ISN'T YOURS," I FUTILELY THOUGHT AS I RETURNED TO SECOND FLOOR PRODUCTION.
"YOU CAN'T HAVE IT." YET I KEPT UP THE STAIRS.
AT LUNCH I GOT MAIL THAT GAVE ME JUICE. I JUST WANTED TO TAKE IT HOME. USE IT SPARINGLY ON SOMETHING WONDERFUL.
THE SALES PEOPLE BEGAN TAPPING ME RIGHT AWAY.
THEIR TAPS ARE SMALL, BUT THE JUICE RUNS THROUGH THEM QUICKER THAN THE LARGER ONES.
I CAN NEVER SEE WHO IT IS WHO DOES MY TEMPLE.
IT DOESN'T DRAIN TERRIBLY FAST. I JUST FIND IT INSULTING.
AT NIGHT I DRINK A DIFFERENT JUICE TO SEAL THE PUNCTURES.
WHILE THAT WHICH WAS TAKEN FROM ME IS FED TO THE GERBILS.
BUT THAT'S A DIFFERENT STORY...

For a catalog of Nicholson's direct sales comics output, mini-comics, and other mischief, send your name and address to:
Onward Comics • PO Box 3684 • Chico, CA 95927